

SECOND PLACE HIGH SCHOOL POETRY

Carrying the Past and Chasing the Future

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Hawthorne Math and Science Academy, Hawthorne, CA

Teacher: Sophia Morris

Survivor Testimony: Frieda (Zelk) Langnas

She chose to carry a piece of paper.
Proof that Danzig had once been home,
Proof of who she came from,
Proof of who she was.

Folded, creased, but never torn—
It followed her home.
A memory normally lost in time,
A name, a place, a past preserved.

At three, not knowing what was going on—how could she?
Her home was not set in stone, following her tiny footsteps.
A journey too vast to hold in her hands.

Danzig, not a home, but history--
Seeking not a shelter, but certainty.
Nazi boys chasing her father led to them
Chasing a home.
A journey carved by fear.

Thankful [they] were in America,
Now she holds another paper,
One that tells a different story,
Stamped, sealed, a different fate.
A new home, not taken, but chosen.
Proof of where she is now,
Proof of who she has become.
Not as a name on a page
But as an American carrying the past and
Claiming the future.

As Frieda is proud to be American, yet keeps Danzig in her heart,
I will follow her lead.
As I chase the future, I carry my past—
With the strength I receive from inherited stories, shaping me
Into who I am and who I may become.